

# UFO RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

A REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

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## PILOTS, OTHERS SEE UFOs IN JAPAN

Pilots and other witnesses saw UFOs over the Pacific coastal areas of Honshu, Japan, on the evening of January 15, 1975.

Noboru Komukai observed more than 20 of the luminous objects flying west at 5:58 over his home in Koma, Tamayamamura. A few minutes later, a student in the same area reported a similar occurrence to the National Latitude Observatory in Mizusawa, Iwate-ken. Coastal residents from Iwaki, Fukushima-ken to Nakaminato, Ibaraki-ken saw the UFOs at around 6 o'clock. Onahama Meteorological Station officials in Iwaki said they received about a dozen similar reports from residents from Miwamachi, Iwaki, to Tomiokamachi, Fukushima-ken. All the witnesses said the objects' color changed to orange as they were flying, according to the January 17, 1975, edition of *The Daily Yomiuri*. Shortly after 6, Koichi Shimada was walking with some friends along the banks of Lake Sayama, Tokorozawa, Saitama-ken, when they saw the strange flying craft heading southeast -- toward Tokyo.

At 6:08, Capt. Toshiki Higuchi was piloting his All Nippon Airways (ANA) YS-11 over Onjukumachi, Chiba-ken, when he saw approximately 15 greyish-blue, luminous objects about 300 meters above the plane, which was cruising at an approximate altitude of 1,800 meters.

"Each of the luminous objects was as bright as a 20-watt electric bulb and measured about 50 centimeters in diameter," Higuchi remarked in the January 18, 1975, edition of *The Daily Yomiuri*. "There were 15 or 16 of them. They were in two groups -- the first group consisting of 10 luminous bodies and the second group consisting of five or six luminous bodies. The second group was a little behind the first group. The luminous bodies were inside something which appeared to be a cloud. They emitted blue light. The 'cloud' was about 500 meters long. I thought at first that the window glass of my plane was clouded. So I wiped off the window glass, but the luminous bodies were still there. Then I thought that the light came from another plane which was flying beyond a thin cloud. I looked at the radar screen and found there was no plane flying beyond the cloud. Meanwhile, the luminous bodies came between my plane and a Japan Air Lines (JAL) jumbo jet which was circling about 1,200 meters above my plane. About half of the JAL plane looked dim because of the luminous bodies flying between that plane and my plane."

The UFOs, traveling at an estimated 370 kilometers per hour, sped toward the south-southwest. Capt. Higuchi stated the objects were about nine kilometers away from his plane when he first saw them, but, at their closest approach, were within 1.8 kilometers.

In a report to UFOR, officials of CBA International, a UFO organization headquartered in Yokohama, Japan, said still another YS-11 airliner crew heading for Sapporo from Tokyo also spotted the objects.

## SCIENTISTS REPORT ON UFO STUDIES

Possibly the largest assemblage of scientists interested in the UFO problem were present at the 13th aerospace sciences meeting of the prestigious American Institute of Aeronautics



ANA flight #680



Sketch of UFO-airliner flight paths, Honshu, Japan, January 15, 1975

(Courtesy: CBA International)



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and Astronautics, Inc. (AIAA), in Pasadena, Calif., January 20-22. Participants at the UFO symposium, held January 20, included Dr. J. Allen Hynek, head of the Center for UFO Studies; Dr. Claude Poher, of the Scientific Projects Division, Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales, Toulouse, France; Dr. Jacques Vallee, Scientific Advisory Board, Center for UFO Studies; Dr. David R. Saunders, Industrial Relations Center, the University of Chicago; Ted R. Phillips, Jr., Associate, Center for UFO Studies; and Dr. Joachim P. Kuettner, World Meteorological Organization, Bracknell, Berkshire, England, and head of the UFO subcommittee of AIAA's Space Physics and Atmospheric Environment Committees.

"Scientific efforts can be seriously hampered if the popular image of [the UFO] subject is grossly misleading," Hynek stated in his talk. "Funds can be curtailed and good men of science who wish to give time to the subject are apt to face misrepresentation whenever their work receives any public attention."

The Northwestern University astronomer also discussed his Center for UFO Studies.

"The center was established to fulfill three main functions," he explained. "First, to provide a focal point for the efforts of those scientists who have become intrigued by and concerned about the UFO problem and wish to contribute their expertise in their respective disciplines to an attack on the problem; second, to provide a focus for those who wish to obtain authoritative and reliable information about the UFO phenomenon, documents, reports, etc., which are not easily available elsewhere; and thirdly, to provide a place where people who have had a UFO experience can report it without fear of ridicule and where they feel that such a report can contribute to a scientific approach to this problem."

Vallee presented a study of "basic patterns in UFO observations" he prepared with Poher.

A study of 258 UFO reports indicated such objects are "seen less frequently as the weather conditions worsen." Approximately 57% of the sightings were made "under clear sky conditions, 15 to 20% under scattered cloud conditions, 10% under high overcast, 8% under low overcast," and the remaining in rain or snow conditions. Vallee reported UFO sightings begin their greatest increase around 5 p.m., reaching a maximum at about 9 p.m., with a steady decrease until a minimum is reached at 1 a.m. A secondary maximum is obtained at 3 a.m., with a low level again occurring at 6 a.m.

"Such a pattern suggests that the decrease in reports of close encounters between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. may simply be due to the fact that the number of potential observers falls drastically as most people spend these hours at home," the Institute for the Future scientist remarked.

Vallee added only a little more than half of the cases studied involved one witness while there is "a paucity of reports" from those in the 20-40 age bracket, possibly due to fear of ridicule, but "the phenomenon does not seem to be associated preferentially with a particular generation." Of the E-M effect cases, the greatest period of observation is between October 1-18.

Saunders' UFOCAT is a computerized catalogue of UFO reports numbering at least 59,237 cases. The total, however, includes duplicate reports of the same observations "as well as many reports of events occurring outside the usable counties of the United States. Thus, only 18,122 entries were used to generate the criterion measures now being described. When these 18,122 UFO reports were distributed among the 3,053 usable counties, the number of reports per county ranged from 0 (numerous instances) to 598 (Montgomery County, Ohio -- the home of USAF [Air Force] Project Blue Book)." Saunders believes the location of the highly-publicized Blue Book in Montgomery County "has elicited several times the number of UFO reports that would otherwise be predicted for such a county."

Phillips is convinced the most "tangible evidence" available for scientific scrutiny can be found in the physical evidence cases.

"If the scientific community is not interested in investigating UFO reports," he elaborated, "it certainly could investigate the alleged physical traces found after reported



landings. An objective investigation... could result in solid answers to the UFO problem.... What we need... is the proper investigation of the soil and plant samples obtained at the landing sites. These samples have been almost totally ignored by science in the past."

Kuettner said the University of Colorado UFO Project report "does not provide the final answer to the UFO problem. The reasons have been published earlier by our committee, but among them is the fact that the Condon study fell into the described trap dissipating much of its efforts on identifiable cases and that it lacked a statistical approach. The conclusions by our committee, based on a 'best judgment' approach, were at variance with Condon's own conclusions."

### UNUSUAL SPECIAL EFFECTS DOMINATE 1974 SIGHTING REPORTS

UFO occupants; physiological effects; physical evidence; animal reactions; a sound from a UFO that was recorded on tape; other objects that emitted sounds; a UFO that paced a motorcycle, causing electro-magnetic (E-M) effects; an object that paced a patrol car at speeds up to 90 m.p.h.; another that followed a truck; a UFO that emitted smaller objects; an object that was photographed; another that took off; a UFO that shook some trees; an object that emitted a light beam onto water, then withdrew it; others that emitted light beams, lit up an apartment, and shone a light into a room; and a UFO that frightened witnesses are characteristics of sighting reports from at least seven states and Canada during June-November, 1974.

Michael Foley and his son saw a UFO at about 9 p.m., November 6, over Cedar Springs, Mich. "I looked out the back door and saw this thing up in the sky, glowing bluish, greenish," Foley stated in the November 14, 1974, edition of the Cedar Springs *Clipper*. "Then it shot a single beam of light down to the ground. It looked like a tube of light. It was flying near the power lines, about 75 feet up."

Later that same evening, Foley, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Townes, their son, Danny, and two others saw it over Pine Lake. The UFO "sparkled like a Christmas tree" and "went by at unbelievable speed." The children said they "thought they heard a whirring noise."

Mrs. Ann Deem and Mrs. Aneil Lambert were driving through Ohioville Borough, Ohio, at approximately 9 p.m., September 24, when they observed several triangular-shaped UFOs following their truck, the September 25, 1974, edition of the East Liverpool, Ohio, *Evening Review*, reported. Other motorists had stopped to view the objects. One man said he saw one of the large UFOs emit a smaller object.

New York state was the scene of two sightings in October.

Just before 3 a.m. on the 21st, Wyoming County Deputy Sheriff William Brown was driving near Perry Center, around 40 miles east of Buffalo, when "suddenly this blinding flash of light swept over me going in the same direction."

"I couldn't make out what it was even though the night was clear....," Brown stated in the *National Enquirer*, January 21, 1975. "The dispatcher told me to go back to Perry Center and check out a complaint. I turned around and had reached about 50 miles an hour when the light swept past me again. This time I got a better look. It was less than 500 feet above my head, but it was so bright I couldn't make out the shape. It was just a brilliant, yellowish light that lit up the countryside. Then, seconds later, a weird noise filled the car. It was a high-pitched, screaming wail that lasted for several seconds. It startled me. It was ear-piercing. My first thought was that my microphone wasn't switched off and was causing feedback, but I made a quick check and it definitely wasn't transmitting. I have to admit I was scared. I pulled off the road and just sat there for a few minutes..."

Deputy Sheriff Salvatore NiCastro was south of Geneseo when he saw it.

"Every time I accelerated, the object speeded up with me," he said. "And when I slowed down, so did it. I drove at speeds between 20 and 90 miles an hour.... It was massive and had no navigation lights. It appeared to be 500 or 600 feet above the ground at least four miles away. I tracked it for 20 minutes until it sped away."

Officer Rolland Barnhardt, of Geneseo, and Deputy Sheriff David Kleine, of Livingston, also watched the UFO.

"It was a round ball in the sky, shining real bright," Barnhardt recalled. "Suddenly, it seemed to just disappear and we thought it was gone. But, a few minutes later, it was back up there, as big and bright as before. We were absolutely baffled. At first I was excited and intrigued..., but then an eerie feeling came over me. I was a little scared."



On returning to Warsaw, west of Geneseo, Brown learned that Police Dispatcher Dennis Quackenbush had heard the object's screaming sound over the radio.

"It didn't sound anything like distortion or interference," the dispatcher remarked.

The sound was recorded on tape. According to the *Enquirer*, "the noise starts on a low note, rises sharply in pitch until it can barely be heard and then drops down to the original low note. It is a perfectly clear tone and very loud."

An electronics expert, Merle Demerly, and two other engineers spent hours working with the tape.

"We have definitely ruled out the possibility that Deputy Brown created the sound," Demerly stated. "It would be impossible without using sophisticated electronic equipment. And tests with an oscilloscope prove that it was not feedback and not the result of any kind of technical fault. I can't even explain how the signal latched onto the police radio, which is specially designed to reject unwanted signals. I'm completely baffled."

Wyoming County Sheriff Adam Capwell concurred.

"There is no way Brown could have been trying to hoax us," he believes.

Three nights later -- at about 7 p.m. on the 24th -- more New York police and residents again spotted UFOs, this time over Lakeland, a suburb of Syracuse. The first witness was, apparently, 12-year old Daniel Wolnick, who alerted his mother and father, a Syracuse Fire Department lieutenant.

"I saw the weirdest thing in the sky," Mrs. Maureen Wolnick told the *Enquirer*, January 28, 1975. "It was white and red, flashing brightly in the sky -- moving slowly downward. I watched it for two minutes. It was the most fantastic thing I ever saw. I was fascinated. Then my husband decided to call the police."

Robert Wolnick described what he saw.

"The UFOs were traveling faster than any plane," he remarked. "The first came within 800 yards of the house at one point. Then a second appeared and shot all the way across the sky at incredible speed. It was very high up and very bright."

Wolnick called the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department. Deputy Sheriff Michael Haven responded.

"There actually was something up there," the policeman confirmed.

Thirty residents were now watching the aerial display. Police Sgt. A.C. Baxter joined them.

"Through [a] telescope I saw a doughnut-shaped object which was adorned with red, green and yellow flashing lights around the edge," Baxter stated. "The lights seemed to be spinning in [a] counter-clockwise direction and, at the center, the UFO was black, as if there was a hole in the middle."

The UFO flew "vertically and horizontally at astonishing speeds," according to Baxter.

"There were two other objects in the sky -- brightly-colored flashing objects -- but, even with the telescope, I was unable to get a clear look at them," he continued.

#### *Policeman "Stunned" by UFO Maneuvers*

Still another policeman -- Sgt. Thomas Lavere -- also arrived on the scene.

"Baxter handed over the telescope to me and I focused on the largest object," Lavere related. "I was stunned by the incredible maneuvers it performed. One moment it would sit still, then, suddenly, it would rise steadily, then bank off sharply in another direction."

Sheriff Patrick J. Corbett stood behind his men.

"There's no baloney here," the law officer emphatically stated. "My men are reliable and they're backed up by 30 other witnesses. We checked with the local AF base and with Syracuse Airport, but neither had any knowledge of any aircraft in the area at that time, either civil or military."

Richard Clark was in the vicinity of Naugatuck and Wiley Avenues, Milford, Conn., at 1:06 a.m., October 22, when he saw "a large, circular object, dark orange in color," according to the October 25, 1974, edition of the *Milford Citizen*. There was a yellow, thick projection on the rear and a thinner projection on the front. The UFO "stopped and swirled around several times and then took off at a high rate of speed across the sky in a parallel direction."



At 7:03 p.m., October 27, Mrs. T. Stevenson, Nancy Longford, Miss V. Anny, and two others saw a silver, metallic-colored UFO over Liberty Lake, not far from Baltimore, Md. The object had a brilliant, glowing light on top "that changed to two blue lights when it moved off in a northeast direction," according to Odyssey Scientific Research Association (P.O. Box 2022, Baltimore, Md. 21203) President John Lutz, who investigated the incident and sent a report to DR. The UFO had two blinking lights on its bottom and brown letters on one side.

As the unidentified craft hovered over the lake, it emitted a white light beam from its underbelly. For about two minutes the "intense" light shone on the surface of the water, then was withdrawn back into the craft. The object, which "had a flat top, circular front, and slanting sides," then extended "small wing-like protrusions" and disappeared to the northeast.

Florida residents were witnesses to UFOs.

On or about October 6, the calm routine of Al Berry's early morning show for WPLA Radio, Plant City, was shattered by numerous calls from local residents who were seeing UFOs. Among the calls to Berry, also general manager of the station, was a woman who said a UFO had "shined a powerful light into her living room." A resident in nearby Dover said she heard the object "hover overhead, then buzz off in an easterly direction," said the October 16, 1974, edition of the *Tampa (Fla.) Neighbor*. A Plant City fireman also saw it flying east.

A motorcyclist said he was traveling at 70 m.p.h. when the same or a similar UFO paced him and caused the cycle's motor, as well as all the electrical equipment, to cease functioning. As the witness dismounted, the UFO flew north with "a tremendous burst of speed."

Other witnesses said the UFOs had red, green, and white lights.

Around 9 p.m., September 29, Frank Smith, also of Plant City, watched "a large, flat, glowing object 'with a hump' that made a swooshing sound near his house," stated the *Plant City Courier*, October 2, 1974. The witness said "his dogs were barking and nearby trees were shaking" as the red, glowing UFO disappeared behind some trees. The youngster's mother confirmed the boy was "frightened and had trouble sleeping afterward."

On the afternoon of October 6, Richard Sampey was hunting in the woods near Heidelberg, Miss., when he spotted a 200-foot long saucer. The "bluish-black, cylindrical-shaped object" was about five feet high and "took off at a high rate of speed, climbing at an angle which just cleared the trees," the Laurel, Miss., *Leader Call*, October 7, 1974, stated.

Canada was also the host to UFO sightings.

### *Object Hovers Over Power Lines*

Roy Fenton said he saw a large, green UFO with flashing lights that hovered above some power lines in Scarboro, Ontario, at 4 a.m., October 22.

"The light and noise woke me up," Fenton stated in *The (Scarboro) Mirror*, October 23, 1974. "The thing lit up the whole apartment. It was mostly green with alternating green and red lights in two rows. It was a large size, probably 70 or 80 feet across and moving over power lines at a pretty slow speed. It made a noise that sounded like a cross between a helicopter and a jet."

At 2:50 a.m., October 19, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Constable Dave Grundy, while responding to a UFO call near Priddis, Alberta, also saw the object.

"It was oblong with a crown and windows on the crown giving off a clear light," the policeman remarked in the October 21, 1974, edition of the *Edmonton (Alberta) Journal*. "It was close enough [the witnesses] could compare it in size to their house. Inside was a white light. It sounded like a jet engine without the whine. After about two minutes, it took off to the north and then went west very fast."

Grundy looked through a small telescope and saw "three objects jumping around all over the place in the west above the Rockies."

"They appeared to be diamond-shaped," the constable related. "That was quite an experience.... I saw what I saw."

David Knutsen was talking to a friend in Surrey, British Columbia, at 4 p.m., October 15, when the boys saw two RCMP officers point excitedly toward the eastern sky. They saw a silver disc that emitted "a soft buzzing sound."

"It just went round and round in a circle, up and down, and then took off super fast in the sky," David recounted in the *Vancouver (British Columbia) Sun*, October 26, 1974.



David snapped a photograph of the UFO. The color film revealed an "almost black object with a sharp but narrow blue glow around its exterior." The boy added the sun was gleaming off the object, which was an estimated 50 feet in diameter and about 400 feet away at its closest approach.

It was 1:15 a.m., June 25, in St. Cyrille de Wendover, Quebec. Mr. X (who prefers anonymity) was preparing for bed. His wife was already asleep. Suddenly, he heard "a sort of bumping noise" outside. Looking out of the window, he was startled to see a reddish-orange disc "hovering over a field to the northeast." The object was so brilliant he could hardly look at it.

X awakened his wife. At the same time, he heard "a buzzing sound" outside. Standing only about 15 feet from the window was a metallic-looking creature approximately six feet tall "with several glowing red horizontal bars across its upper body." The apparent occupant had stiff body movements, like a robot. It was inspecting the interior of a small prefabricated building near the witnesses' mobile home. Mr. and Mrs. X entered the living room for a better view and saw three more creatures. The frightened observers watched these three creatures inspect "the shaft and wheel assembly of a mobile home which had not yet been placed on a foundation," according to UFO journalist David Branch, writing in the December 4, 1974, edition of *The (Santa Ana, Calif.) Register*.

The sighting lasted for about three hours. Mr. and Mrs. X saw 15 of the occupants. Once, all of them stood in line by a creek, "then moved together suddenly, as though by command."

Nearby, a dog "pulled out of his collar and hid." Three circles of flattened grass, approximately 17 feet in diameter and two feet wide, were found by four Canadian investigators. More than two months after the incident, circles could still be seen. There were apparently three "landing sites" and "grass at the sites reportedly grew twice as high as surrounding grass." A strange white substance was found where the occupants had been. At last report, the substance was being analyzed by the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON).

#### NEW KASS BOOK JUGGLES FACTS (A Book Review)

The new book, *UFOs Explained*, by Philip J. Klass, senior avionics editor for *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, concludes "the idea of wondrous spaceships from a distant civilization really is a fairy story that is tailored to the adult mentality." As in his first book, *UFOs -- Identified*, published in 1968, Klass has the very annoying habit of fitting the facts to his theories in explaining away various top UFO sightings. Few of his "explanations" fit into the physical characteristics of the sightings. Further, his "way-out" indications that highly-trained witnesses (such as airline pilots) are really incompetent observers and that other witnesses whose reputations for honesty have been previously authenticated are really hoaxsters who "fake" their sightings for a variety of reasons ranging from saving a town from "going to seed" to getting a relative elected in a local political race, are not only an insult to the witnesses themselves, but a discredit to scholarly and objective research.

The author explains the classic Chiles-Whitted encounter, involving an Eastern Airlines plane crew and one passenger who witnessed a UFO near Montgomery, Ala., on July 24, 1948, as a meteor. According to Chiles, the object "flashed down and we veered to the left and it veered to the left... Then, as if the pilot [of the UFO] had seen us and wanted to avoid us, it pulled up with a tremendous burst of flame out of its rear and zoomed up into the clouds." Since any amateur astronomer can tell you meteors simply cannot do all these things, Klass obviously had to come up with some sort of explanation. The witnesses were victims of "auto-suggestion," a sort of mass hypnosis in which Chiles, Whitted, and the passenger (in an entirely different part of the aircraft) merely thought they saw a UFO when, actually, they viewed a meteor.

Hot-air balloons can also do some pretty fantastic things, the author asserts. He listed the case of a pilot in Seattle, Wash., who saw objects on July 7, 1968, and hundreds of others who saw UFOs that "zipped along at fantastic speed" over the San Gabriel Valley, Calif., in late March, 1966, as such. The pilot added "his gyrocompass was 170 degrees in error... and the panel clock stopped at 10:35 p.m." The "balloons" were seen flying in formation and abruptly changed direction and accelerated. Klass' explanations: the pilot was



flying in 360-degree turns, thus producing the gyro errors; the pilot simply forgot to wind his manual cockpit clock (Klass' hypothesis, not the pilot's); and the "balloons were reacting... to the winds aloft and the vagaries of their own construction" -- all highly improbable. According to a newspaper report, some boys said they had launched the balloons. What Klass does not say is that, more than a few times after such a sighting, would-be hoaxers have claimed their earthly "inventions" caused a particular sighting even if their particular "inventions" in no way fitted the physical characteristics of the sightings.

Regarding the highly-acclaimed Socorro, N.M., sighting of April 24, 1964, involving Police Officer Lonnie Zamora, the aviation writer hypothesizes a hoax had been perpetrated because Socorro was "going to seed" and the town officials wanted more of the tourist trade. (In his first book, Klass explained the Socorro case as "freak plasma"). This is completely contrary to the opinion of every serious researcher and investigator, who have lauded Zamora as one of the most respectable and reliable witnesses in the history of UFO reports. Klass also neglects to mention the AF officer investigating the case at the time considered Zamora as the most reliable witness he had ever interviewed and one AF report on the incident thought the sighting to be of such importance it should be brought to the attention of the AF Secretary.

Much the same assertion is made about another landing case that occurred three years later -- April 21, 1967 -- in South Hill, Va., in which an object was seen by Clifton Crowder (and verified by another witness) to take off, leaving the road burning and four holes and a burned-out area. He said police told him four completely charred matches were found on the burned spot. Further, a rainfall occurred that evening prior to midnight and no rainwater was found in the holes, *"as far as I could learn."* (Editor's italics). The editor of this newsletter and other investigators for the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) interviewed Crowder, a secondary witness, and police officials at length. There was no mention of any charred matches or rainwater or the lack of it. Klass hints Crowder, with, possibly, others, staged a hoax. The reason, Klass asserts, is that Crowder desired to gain publicity for his brother who was running for reelection to the County Board of Supervisors. Also, Klass adds, he (Klass) saw Crowder carry a book of matches to light his cigarettes! Our interviews with the police and friends and neighbors of Crowder showed him to be, possibly, the most respected member of the South Hill community. *Every one was in complete agreement Crowder was too sincere and honest an individual to stage a hoax.*

#### Author Hits Coyne Case

Since the *National Enquirer* awarded its annual \$5,000 prize for best UFO evidence of 1973 to Maj. Lawrence Coyne and his helicopter crew who saw a UFO near Mansfield, Ohio, on October 18, 1973, the case was grist for Klass' mill. Once again, it was a meteor-fireball with rather remarkable characteristics. The "fireball" hovered over the aircraft and the witnesses could clearly see "the gray metallic structure." Then it turned, ascended and disappeared. There were E-M effects to the helicopter's radio and the aircraft climbed at the incredible rate of 1,000 feet per minute -- an impossible feat, Coyne said. Klass' explanation is that the pilot instinctively and subconsciously pulled the controls, causing the craft to climb. *Note that the pilot himself said this would be impossible.* Once again, any amateur astronomer will tell you a meteor-fireball does not stop, hover, turn, and ascend straight up.

Klass also makes some statements that are simply not true to support his theories. During a three-year period -- 1963 - 1965 -- "public interest in UFOs was fairly low" and the AF received an average of only 40 reports a month from the public, indicating that was all the sightings there were. A conservative estimate by many serious researchers is that only one in 10 sightings are reported, so, even if *all* the reported sightings went to the AF (which never happens, however, since many observers report their experiences to UFO organizations and not the AF), that still leaves an average of 400 per month -- no piddling figure. The fact is that one of the largest sighting flaps on record occurred during the summer of 1965, with some organizations such as NICAP receiving *hundreds* of reports for the month of August alone. He also indicates news media and UFO organizations rarely, if ever, devote space in their publications to follow-up natural explanations of UFO reports. While it is true this happens some of the time, it does not occur nearly as much as Klass would have his readers believe. Newspapers, especially, and respectable UFO organizations *do* often print follow-ups, if any.



Klass dredges up the old argument that UFOs from distant planets could not reach us because of the long distances in space. Like most debunkers, he leaves his readers with the impression that extraterrestrial (ET) beings are no more technologically advanced than man. Since even the most conservative scientists concede there may be *many millions* of intelligent ET civilizations far more advanced than man, this argument leaves much to be desired. In other words, Klass is saying because we cannot reach a nearby star in less than, say, four light years, it follows a civilization (even far more advanced than we) from that star system cannot reach us in less than the same amount of time. One has only to survey the incredible technological advance man has made in the last century. Even some scientists are questioning whether the speed of light is an absolute that will stand the wearing test of time. As the late astronomer, Dr. Frank Halstead, once said, "Too often we tend to judge conditions in the universe by conditions here on earth."

The author further elaborates on his ball-lightning or plasma theory for explaining away numerous UFO sightings -- the backbone of his first book. The late Dr. James E. McDonald, senior physicist of the University of Arizona's Institute of Atmospheric Physics and a top meteorologist, effectively called Klass to task on this.

In a letter to Klass dated September 28, 1966, McDonald stated: "The most obvious difficulty with the ball lightning hypothesis is that there is no evidence to suggest that any plasmoids of that type can be naturally generated in absence of intense electrical storms. By proposing that transmission-line corona discharges might occasionally initiate plasmoid formation, you might seem to be sidestepping that difficulty; but you fail to confront the fact that hundreds of credible observers have reported UFO phenomena without any involvement of power lines (as well as without any involvement with thunderstorms)."

In a speech before the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute Astronautics Symposium, March 12, 1968, Montreal, Canada, the physicist elaborated: "My most basic objection to the position [Klass] is now defending concerning plasma-UFOs is that I feel he does not confront the fact that the interesting UFO reports do not involve hazy, glowing amorphous masses, but involve reportedly sharp-edged objects often exhibiting discernible structural details, carry discrete lights or port-like apertures, and maneuver for time-periods and in kinematical patterns that are extremely difficult to square with his plasma-UFO hypothesis.... Klass has written a book filled with sometimes ludicrous errors concerning plasma theory and related physics. He accuses the 'UFOrians' of having closed minds; looking at his handling of the UFO problem, I am left with the difficult choice of deciding whether he, himself, has an even more tightly closed mind or whether the glaring weaknesses of his book simply reflects his ignorance of elementary principles of physics and electrical engineering." McDonald added Klass relied on "argument by innuendo, argument by concatenation," and "argument by juxtaposition."

In a lecture before the Chicago chapter of the American Meteorological Society, May 31, 1968, McDonald said: "What is so surprising about [Klass'] position is that he quite blandly ignores the most salient characteristics of plasmas -- their extreme instability and short life-times, their dependence upon very strong power sources to maintain free-electron populations in the face of decay processes, and their critical confinement requirements. Further, he really does not confront the fact that the truly provocative UFO reports are close-range, low-altitude sightings of seemingly solid objects with configurations that can only be described... as 'structural' or 'fabricated'... The closest he seems to come to trying to fit such reported details into his hypothesis is that freak atmospheric electrical conditions are producing UFOs, is to suggest that the UFOs produce a hypnotic trance, confusing the observer into mentally converting patches of dark and light on the plasmoid into shapes of ports and domes."

Although it may not be as easy as all that to some, Jacques Vallee's oft-repeated "Klass dismissed!" statement is still quite appropriate.

[Philip J. Klass, *UFOs Explained* (New York: Random House, 1974), Introduction, Index, Photographs, 369 pgs., \$8.95]

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The next edition of *UFO Research Newsletter* will be ready for mailing on or about April 15, 1975